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SUBJECT: TALKING POINTS FOR JANUARY 6 OPEN DEBATE ON UNAMA

¶1. (U) USUN is instructed to pursue the objectives in paragraph 2 and draw from the points in paragraph 3 during the January 6 Security Council open debate on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

¶2. (U) Objectives:

- Highlight the results of the U.S. Afghanistan-Pakistan strategic review
- Discuss the need for improved civilian assistance coordination
- Stress the need for increasing "Afghanization" of efforts

¶3. (U) Begin points:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Kai Eide, not only for his briefing today, but for his tireless work over the past two years at the helm of UNAMA. Your leadership has been essential to the international community's efforts in Afghanistan during this period.

Mr. President, this is a crucial moment in Afghanistan. Following President Karzai's inauguration, the international community must move quickly to support the Government of Afghanistan as it, together with the Afghan people, presses forward on a bold agenda to halt the worrisome negative momentum of the past several years. The situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated for too long, and now we must move with deliberate, urgent action to help the Afghans themselves turn things around.

President Obama announced the completion of our own policy review on Afghanistan just over a month ago. Our commitment to Afghanistan is enduring, and our objective remains unchanged: to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qa'ida and to prevent their return to either Afghanistan or Pakistan. In order to achieve this goal, the President has ordered an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. They will target the insurgency, secure population centers, and train Afghan security forces. Many of the 43 other members of ISAF have also announced troop increases. Together, we will partner with Afghan forces so that we can begin transferring security responsibility to the Government of Afghanistan by the summer of 2011.

IF NEEDED ON CIVILIAN CASUALTIES: The United States places the highest priority on protecting civilian populations and avoiding injury and loss of life among Afghan civilians during operations against insurgents and terrorists. To this end, we and our ISAF partners will continue coordinating as closely as possible with the Afghan National Security Forces. We hope the ANSF will be able to take the lead on security matters throughout the country, as they have already done in parts of Afghanistan, as soon as possible.

Our military efforts in Afghanistan must be joined by a

corresponding intensification of our civilian programs. Our civilian efforts will emphasize development of more responsive, visible, and accountable Afghan institutions at the provincial, district, and local levels, where Afghans have the most contact with their government. We will also encourage and support the Government of Afghanistan's reinvigorated plans to fight corruption by using concrete measures of progress toward greater accountability.

In order to achieve this, the United States is substantially increasing the numbers of civilian experts in Afghanistan, and we are on track to triple our civilian presence. At the end of January 2009, we had 320 civilians on the ground in Afghanistan. We expect that number to reach 920 by January 2010 and we will achieve our target of just under 1,000 civilians shortly thereafter. Our civilians are partnering with Afghans over the long term to enhance the capacity of national and sub-national government institutions and to help rehabilitate Afghanistan's key economic sectors so that Afghans themselves can defeat the insurgents, who promise only more violence.

Economic growth is critical for undermining extremists' appeal in the short term and for sustainable economic development in the long term. Our top reconstruction priority is implementing a civilian-military agriculture redevelopment strategy to restore Afghanistan's once vibrant agriculture sector.

A key element of our political strategy will also be supporting Afghan-led efforts to reintegrate Taliban who renounce al-Qa'ida, lay down their arms, and engage in the constitutional political process.

Mr. President, UNAMA plays a key role in the international community's civilian efforts in Afghanistan. Its work on institution building and governance, security sector reform, and donor coordination are all central to our goal of empowering the Government of Afghanistan. However, on one aspect of UNAMA's mandate, civilian coordination, there is broad consensus within the international community that our efforts need to be enhanced. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, coordinating such a large array of national assistance programs with goals identified by the Government of Afghanistan is a substantial undertaking, for which UNAMA needs increased resources and support from member states. We strongly echo his call for strengthened coordination, and support his proposal to bolster UNAMA with experienced staff from key donor countries. The United States stands ready to support such a request with appropriate U.S. personnel.

The success of UNAMA's mission also depends on its presence throughout the country. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the continued progress in opening UNAMA's regional and provincial offices. We are pleased that the Secretary-General's report affirms that, despite the brutal October 28 attack on the Kabul guesthouse, the UN remains committed to opening additional offices throughout Afghanistan in 2010. We reiterate our full support for UNAMA's efforts to strengthen the security of UN personnel in Afghanistan. We are open to working creatively with UNAMA to support these efforts.

I also want to comment on elections, given the fact that Afghanistan's Constitution requires elections to be held this spring. While we recognize the importance of adhering to the Constitution, we agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the 2009 Afghan presidential and provincial council elections exposed serious flaws in the Afghan electoral process. We are committed to working with the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to address these shortcomings before future elections are held in Afghanistan.

Looking ahead, the upcoming conference in London, co-chaired by Afghanistan, the UK, and the UN, will be an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its support for the Government of Afghanistan's agenda, as outlined in

President Karzai's inaugural address. We also look forward to a spring conference in Kabul where the Government of Afghanistan will have the opportunity to present its more detailed plans and programs for achieving its ambitious goals.

Mr. President, ultimately, success in our efforts in Afghanistan will require a shared understanding between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community on the need for dramatic action. President Karzai's inaugural speech sent the right message about moving in a new direction, including his commitment to reintegration and reconciliation, improving relations with Afghanistan's regional partners, and steadily increasing the security responsibilities of Afghan security forces. We must see action and progress. We will be clear about our expectations. We will encourage and reinforce Afghan Ministries, Governors, and local leaders who deliver for the people and combat corruption. However, we will not reinforce those government and political leaders who are neither accountable nor acting in the service of the Afghan people and the state. Furthermore, we will also focus our assistance in areas -- such as agriculture -- that can make an immediate impact in the lives of the Afghan people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

End points.
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